

Voting Equipment Task Force

Minutes of July 30, 2015

The members of the Voting Equipment Task Force met on July 30, 2015, at 4:00 pm at the Center for Southeast Asians.

Voting Equipment Task Force Members present:

Secretary of State Nellie M. Gorbea, Chairperson

Melissa Long, RI Department of State

Rob Rock, RI Department of State

Christopher Fowler, RI Department of State

Bob Rapoza, Board of Elections

Bob Cooper, Governor's Commission on Disabilities

Brandon Bell, RI Republican Party

James Spooner, RI Moderate Party

Ken McGill, City of Pawtucket

Renay Omisore, City of Providence

Rick O'Neill, City of Newport

Janet Ruggiero, Town of North Providence

Dale Holberton, Town of South Kingstown

Louise Phaneuf, Town of Burrillville

John Marion, Common Cause Rhode Island

Pilar McCloud, NAACP-Providence

Jane Koster, League of Women Voters

Channavy Chhay, Center for Southeast Asians

Steve Sepe, City of Cranston

Drew Milligan, Providence Millennial Taskforce

Travis Escobar, Providence Millennial Taskforce

Voting Equipment Task Force Members absent:

Joseph McNamara, RI Democratic Party

Kathleen Connell, AARP Rhode Island

Jose Batista, RI Latino Civic Fund

Department of State Staff present:

Steve Gerencser, Deputy Secretary, Chief of Staff

Gonzalo Cuervo, Senior Advisor & Director of Communications

Jason Martiesian, Director of Legislative Affairs

Guests:

Paul Caranci, Democracy Live, Inc.

Kate Bowden, RI Disability Law Center

Kathy Placencia, Providence Board of Canvassers

Elena Saltzman, Fellow, RI Department of State

Ysalia Rodriguez, RI Department of State

Kristen McGill

Stacey Phommatheth, Center for Southeast Asians

Lindsay Ferranti, RI House Policy Office

Luis Vargas, RI Republican Party

Tom Papa, RI Senate President's Office

Anthony Cherry, The Mayforth Group

Davon Williams, NAACP Youth Organization

I. CALL TO ORDER

Secretary Gorbea calls the meeting to order at 4:06 pm.

II. TASK FORCE OVERVIEW

The Task Force was formed to bring together diverse perspectives and to hear what the community thinks should be considered when purchasing new voting equipment.

III. ROLL CALL

Three members are absent.

IV. VOTING EQUIPMENT OVERVIEW

The last time Rhode Island purchased voting equipment was in 1997. There are different types of voting equipment available to purchase. Rhode Island is required by state law to use a paper ballot system. There are only 5-6 companies certified by the Elections Assistance Commission (EAC).

Discussion relating to internet voting.

V. DISCUSSION

Some of the concerns and expectations that Task Force members mention include:

- Being able to vote quickly and efficiently at the polling place**

o Short lines, names found quickly at check-in

- Confidence that their vote was counted**
- Properly functioning voting machines**
- Independent and private voting for voters using accessible equipment**
- Inclusive ballot and not a separate voting system for voters with disabilities**
- To know where the correct polling place is, what is on the ballot, and how to affiliate for primaries**
- Not feeling intimidated by the process of casting a ballot**
- Simple, easy-to-use, voter-friendly equipment**
- Poll workers to be welcoming and helpful to voters needing assistance**
- Verifiability, reliability, accessibility, security, and transparency in voting system**
- Ability to audit voting equipment and ensure vote counts are accurate**
- Millennials expect high-tech voting equipment, similar to other everyday activities**
- Accurate and up-to-date voter rolls**
- Non-partisan, fair elections and improvement to overall voting process**
- Durable equipment that will not need to be replaced again for a long time**

Suggestions to improve the voting experience and to meet voters'

expectations include:

- Electronic poll books to speed up check-in process and shorten lines**
- Equipment that allows voters to view and either confirm or change their vote before the machine tabulates their ballots, rather than just returning invalid ballots**
- All-in-one voting system, rather than separate machines for accessible voting**
- Hybrid equipment that allows voters to mark choices at home, and then scan a barcode at the polling place to load and cast their ballots.**
- Equipment that can support the many languages that Rhode Islanders speak, and availability of interpreters for voters who may not read or write in their native language**
- Better and broader voter education programs to help voters:**
 - o Learn how to use high-tech voting equipment**
 - o Learn about the democratic process, especially for new citizens**
 - o Update registration information before the 30-day deadline**
 - o Know where and when to vote, well in advance of Election Day**
- Expand effort to recruit the best poll workers possible and increase training for poll workers on how to work with voters in need of assistance**
- Secure voting equipment with open source code and audit capabilities**
- Ballot-on-demand printers to allow voters at the wrong polling place to vote**
- High-tech voting equipment that Millennials actually want to use**

- **“Expandable” voting system that can be built upon as technology advances**
- **A smart phone application that reminds voters where and when to vote**
- **Online registration to make it easier for voters to change registration information**
- **Electronic Registration Information Center (ERIC) to help maintain accurate and up-to-date voter file**
- **Equipment that is durable and long-lasting, but lightweight and easy to move**

Discussion relating to equipment procurement timeline. It is noted that this transition to new equipment would be much easier than the transition in the 1990s, because the equipment will still be optical scan.

Task Force ends discussion.

No votes were taken.

VI. PUBLIC COMMENT

RI Disability Law Center thanks the Task Force for their time and input.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourns at 5:17 pm.